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Documentary signification**

Brie, Mircea

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Parish registers of civil status in Transylvania in the second half of the nineteenth century. Documentary signification¹

Mircea Brie

Abstract

The parish registers of civil status, although the main sources of documentation for historical demography, are used with significant results by the other sciences such as history, ethnography, sociology, anthropology, linguistics, etc.. The perspectives of approaching the rural community and family have expanded considerably using these sources of ecclesiastical origin documentaries. The first researchers who refer to a systematic methodology that uses the parish registers of civil status as documentary sources for the completion of demographic data suggest the use of other sources, hitherto unused for this purpose. They will apply a new method, a modern innovation, the stripping and analysis of parish registers of civil status within the meaning of the reconstruction of demographic events (birth, marriage, death).

The family reconstitution method, by analyzing the parish registers of civil status proposed by L. Henry and M. Fleury, has revolutionized the field of study dealing with people. Louis Henry believes that the parish registers of civil status is the ultimate source of information for the pre-state period and this is precisely the reason for which he proposes restoring the family's biological life. Church registers are only able to give us an insight into the family in rural areas, at least for the second half of the XIX century. Church documents, the fundamental sources for researching family life, are of two categories: 1. civil status registers and annual reports of the parishes, 2. Church authorities funds, documents and minutes recorded by the bishops. These documents are complex sources for the researcher interested in historical demography, social history, and the economic history of toponymy, birthdays, etc.

Processing the data contained in these records requires a specific methodology. They allow us to observe trends that have occurred on the long-term demographic events such as: birth, marriage or death. These records are presented for a long time as their only source of documentation regarding civil status and demographic events in the life of most people. Researching these records can unveil important features of natural population movement, the phenomenon of birth, of marriage, the divorce or death. Then, an analysis of form and content of these registers can capture the cultural universe of the priests who fill these records.

These Church documents proved to be important, especially where other documentary sources (mainly those in the category of records made by the state) have proved insufficient, incomplete and unclear. The parish registers of civil status in this case are suitable for both a qualitative analysis, and a quantitative one at the level of local communities. Beyond their usefulness and significance of documentary source, these documents should be regarded as being subjective because they were managed by priests (every priest is then an exponent to promote demographic and confessional "realities" and such realities were viewed from the perspective of his own religious convictions). The parish registers, however, prove to be the only documents that allow us to penetrate the privacy of individuals in each community. A documentary is also undeniably a good dowry that researchers should promote and use in their research not only locally but also to verify and demonstrate certain behaviours and overall trends.

Keywords

Parish registers, Transylvania, family, ethnicity, confession, community

1. Parish registers and beginnings of historical demography

As an independent discipline within the field of Social Sciences, Historical Demography was established in the postwar period, developing under the tutelage of Demography and History¹. As the French geographer Pierre George² said, "Historical Demography is a new ore relatively new science, one of the latest coming from Humanities, daughter to the marriage between figures and Social Sciences related to Geography – science of localization and space - with History - science of circumstances and time – disciplined through the rigors of Economy, subject to the ineluctable imperatives of Biology". The term of *Historical Demography* was first used on the occasion of the VIII International Congress of Historical Sciences in 1933, where J. Bourdon presented a communication titled *Les méthodes de la démographie historique*. But this term was synonymous with the history of the population³. Likewise, in the sense of history of the population, Roger Mols uses the phrase "historical demography" when analysing the medieval genesis of European settlements⁴. Moreover, the author outlines a first history of the parish registers within Western Europe⁵, inquiring about the period of their occurrence in various countries. It is also emphasised how important and valuable are such documents to historical demography.

The author of *Demography Manual* (Philippe Moucha), published in 1964, found the retrospective demographic study to be of the utmost importance⁶, demography in its historical evolution respectively. He warned though that such research is difficult and very complex and that would require the study of multiple sources of information, sometimes contradictory. He advocates for the recovery of these sources, for their

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comparison (until compatibility is reached), and for the obtained results to be analysed by using working hypotheses. The interest for these documentary sources, especially for parish registers is old. They have often been analysed and catalogued, but rarely effectively investigated. An interesting study, dating 1912, under the name *Les registres paroissiaux en Belgique*⁷, was published by J. Vannerus. The author of this study does nothing but an inventory of the documents, signalling their importance and respective role. No research in the sense of stripping, of cutting to the core of information had been done.

The founder of Historical Demography is undoubtedly considered to be Louis Henry⁸. Himself and Michel Fleury were the authors of the very first manual of Historical Demography (published in Paris in 1956, under the name *Des registres paroissiaux et l'histoire de la population. Manuel de dépouillement et d'exploitation de l'état civil ancien*). The two authors propose to add demographic data with other sources, never before used for this purpose. They will apply a new method, modern and innovating, of stripping and analysing the parish registers of civil status, in the sense of reconstruction of the demographic events (birth, marriage, death). The method of family reconstitution by analysing the parish registers of civil status proposed by L. Henry and M. Fleury has revolutionised the field of study dealing with people⁹. Louis Henry believes that the parish registers of civil status is the ultimate source of information for the pre-state period and this is precisely the reason for his proposing to restore the biological life of the family. He considers that family is the most important social group of the community and of the society. In 1958, Henry L. and E. Gautier, after researching the community and family in the village of Crulai, published a paper setting out much more clearer methodologies for Historical Demography¹⁰. This is the first monograph addressed from the perspective of historical demography. Historical Demography is beginning to define the sources of documentation (civil status registers) also by the used methods (microanalysis was introduced based on nominal data coupling)¹¹. Numerous monographs, whose research was founded on the method of stripping parish registers of civil status were about to be developed in the near future. Among these we mention the work titled *Beauvais et Beauvais de 1600 à 1730*, signed by P. Goubert¹². The method used by the author allowed him to capture the behaviour of peasants in the Beauvais area¹³, managing to explain the reduced frequency of illegitimacy, the rarity of celibacy, late marriage age, during the interval between births, the birth rate, etc.

The method used by the two researchers who led the way was followed by hundreds of historians from across Europe. The parish registers ceased to be the “dormant mob” of the old archives¹⁴, becoming now the most important and sometimes the only source of documentation for the history of the many and the humble. Demographers and historians were joined in the following period by sociologists, anthropologists, ethnographers; thus, the approach became much wider. Civil status registers became important sources of documentation for increasingly various fields of research. Thus, the prospects for addressing the rural community and the family have expanded considerably.

On the occasion of the World Congress of the International Committee of Historical Science held in 1960 in the city of Stockholm, L. Henry made a synthetic presentation of the methods used by Historic Demography. The experts present at the event decided to set up an International Commission of Historical Demography¹⁵. In 1963, in Paris, the Society of Historical Demography was established (chaired in rotation – until 1975 - by Marcel Reinhard, Pierre Goubert, Louis Henry and A. Armengaud) whose periodical publication, *Annales de démographie historique*, played an important role in promoting the new History discipline¹⁶. The publication “*Annales de démographie historique*”, published since 1965¹⁷, played an overwhelming role in imposing the discipline internationally. The Historical Demography has evolved gradually, both technically and methodologically. Many historians, demographers and statisticians will review the methodology used in the study of population. The use and retrieval of statistical data, which to that date had not proved to be of interest for historical research, gained a new impetus with the analysis of Bertrand Grille on statistical sources¹⁸. Family, marriage and nuptiality, fecundity and birth are increasingly debated topics in the circles of French demographic historians of this period¹⁹.

Extensive works of interest were published outside France, in Belgium, Britain, Western Germany, USA, etc. In 1964, in Cambridge, a research team led by Peter Laslett and E.A. Wrigley founded a prestigious profile institution: *Cambridge Group for History of Population and Social Structure*, reorganised in 1974 as an independent research unit. The research carried out by this institution allowed the wider approach of other issues related to family life²⁰. Also, the socio-economic structure of peasant households during the pre-state period is identified along with other demographic variables of the British society. Representatives of this institution will partake, with a significant role, in research that aims to restore the demographic situation of the English society for a period of 300 years. The research is completed by the publication of *An Introduction to English Historical Demography. From the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Century*²¹. The proposed model was resumed by Lawrence Stone²², in 1979, when he published the volume titled *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500 – 1800*²³. As conclusions to this paper, we note the fact that the pace of socio-economic, political and cultural development influences directly the mutations of the individual behaviour towards his family, marital

arrangements, reflection on feelings and gender. Specific situation marriages, housekeeping, number of children, divorce or concubinage place the individual somewhere social control and inner desire. The traditional world begins to crumble on its own structure, the individual emancipation entails the community emancipation and implicitly, the birth of new mental patterns, accepted as values by the following generations.

A great contribution to research of marriage and family fertility, together with E.A. Wrigley²⁴, has been brought by J. Hajnal²⁵ or by E. Shorter²⁶. J. Hajnal, after a long period of researching the parish registers of civil status, concluded that the Western Latin Church played a key role in shaping the specific demographic model of modern Europe. "European marriage", as conceptualized by J. Hajnal model, around which rallied many Western historians demographers, is considered by P. Chaunu as "unique, unprecedented and without corollary"²⁷. The model designed by Hajnal characterized the modern "marriage" by old age at the time of marriage and celibacy in women. This reality, rather specific to Catholic and Protestant Europe, is difficult to identify in Eastern Europe, including Romanian space where female celibacy is almost nonexistent, and the age at marriage has remained at levels not very high. Such a model, characterized as "European", is regarded with circumspection by P. Chaunu who, distancing himself from it, states that European marriage is socially homogenous, with sub-models or nuances, one of an aristocratic type, and the other popular²⁸. Female celibacy is rarely met in village households, unlike what happens at the top of the social hierarchy²⁹.

Martine Segalen, starting off from a denominative presentation of parish registers of civil status of a place called Vraiville came to a family reconstruction through an analysis that included socio-professional aspects of those involved³⁰. Using "cross-section analysis"³¹, the researcher could follow the evolution curve in marriage age over two centuries and a half, together with the seasonal variation of marriage³². Moving beyond the dry statistics, Martine Segalen's methodology provides a sociologizing perspective of the demographic phenomena. Inter-personal relations³³, the role of marriage in the reproduction of family and society, the community are elements that emphasize what Historical Sociology itself defined by marriage³⁴. Relying then to "cross-section analysis", the author could follow generational and inter-generational developments³⁵. Somewhat similar concerns had also Yvonne Knibiehler³⁶, J.L. Flandrin³⁷, Edward Shorter³⁸, Robert Muchembled³⁹, Jack Goody⁴⁰, M. Mitterauer, R. Sieder⁴¹, etc., but Philippe Ariès, George Duby, Michelle Perrot, Pierre Chaunu, Alain Corbin, François Lebrun are more known. An undeniable contribution, both qualitative and quantitative, bring to the table, by promoting the same approaches, the volumes of *Histoire de la famille*, coordinated by André Burguière, Christiane Klapish-Zuber, Martine Segalen și Françoise Zonabend⁴².

A famous research team, a true laboratory of Historical Demography, has worked at the Sorbonne since 1972. In addition to restoring families, the interest of this school of the Sorbonne has been also that of "Historical Demography"⁴³. Another team, led by Pierre Chaunu and P. Gouhier is created at the University of Caen.

An important reference work for Historical Demography was published by Jaques Duparquier⁴⁴ in Paris, in, 1974, titled *Introduction à la démographie historique*. A remarkable manual of Historical Demography, the work manages to capture the existing necessary links between demography and local history. We note an interesting stripping method of the parish registers of civil status, following the main thread of demographic events in the life of reconstituted families.

Restoring family history has continued to preoccupy researchers, the methods have diversified with the use of information provided by sciences related to historical demography. Historical Demography seeks to go beyond quantifying numbers, basically following the issuance of assumptions and conclusions meant to demystify history. The individual, as an actor of the historical event, cannot and should not be separated from the living environment and the world in which he lives. He identifies with life and everyday existence of his community, with the collective mind, with the crowd, crowd that shapes and sculpt values, norms and patterns.

2. General aspects on the parish registers of civil status registration in Transylvania

At first, these registers were not completed on regular basis, priests were free to produce documents as they wanted, there was no standard form for it⁴⁵. The first civil registry records were simple notes that priests took with reference to donations and fees received by the clergy at baptisms, weddings and funerals. Also, not all demographic events were recorded⁴⁶. Until the end of XVIII century, the civil status notes were very brief and mixed up together, in chronological order, for all demographic events; then they started to record information under three headings: baptism, marriage and death. If in the West, the compulsory registration of these civil registries was required quite early, with the state involved in controlling the church documents, in the Romanian space they are rather late. Earlier in Transylvania than in Moldova or the Romanian Country, these records came to be regularly registered, while respecting a certain methodology in filling them. The bishops of various denominations within Transylvania from the late XVIII century, at the Austrian government's intervention, gave instructions to the priests together with standard models of filling in civil status registers. The Recruitment Rules issued by Maria Theresa in 1773 and implemented by Joseph II in 1784, provided an entire

chapter on how to prepare such documents of civil status⁴⁷. It also provided the priests' obligation to submit quarterly reports on the increase or decrease of the population. We mention here the following orders, issued to priests by the state authorities: all priests would keep records books (January 7, 1770); all records would be kept in places away from sources of fire, and in case a fire broke out these records would be saved first (May 10, 1774); the register transcripts would be drawn up in two copies, one to be submitted to the civilian jurisdiction (Law 23 of 1827)⁴⁸. The state gives the Church this role, but strongly requires the Bishops to oversee the preparation of these registers⁴⁹. By the mid XIX century, the civil status registers were manually lined by the priests, although the printing of such documents had been started since 1784. The Orthodox registers are written in Romanian and Serbian (in Banat), the Roman-Catholic ones in Latin and Hungarian, the Calvinist and Unitarian ones in Hungarian, the Lutheran ones in German, the Greek Catholic ones in Latin and Romanian and the mosaic ones in Hungarian, German or even Hebrew⁵⁰.

The contents of registers of civil status was improving more and more, primarily due to the state pressure. Since 1850 new sections are entered in the register for baptized people, one is referring to the still-born, another to recording the birth legitimacy or illegitimacy. In the register for married people there is room for new entries referring to the state of married people (young person, widow(er)), and in the death register a new entry registered the cause of death. In all registers, there was a section reserved for observations and special mentions which the priest might write down.

3. Parish registers of civil status in Transylvania - documentary significance and importance

Church registers are the only ones able to give an insight into the family in rural areas, at least for the second half of the XIX century. Church documents, fundamental sources for researching the family life are of two categories: 1. Registers of civil status and annual reports of the parishes; 2. Church authorities funds, documents and minutes recorded by the bishoprics. These are complex sources for the researcher with an interest in historical demography, in social history and economic history of toponymy, birthdays, etc. Processing the data from these registers requires a specific methodology. They allow us to observe trends that have occurred on the long-term demographic events such as birth, marriage or death. These records are, for a long time, unique sources of documentation regarding civil status and demographic events in the private life of the majority of population. Researching these records, we can discover important features of natural movement of population, the phenomenon of birth, of marriage, of the divorce and of death⁵¹. Then, an analysis of form and content of these registers can capture the cultural universe of the priests filling in these records.

a. Parish registers: sources of ethnic and religious setting

In Hungary and Transylvania, after the first census of 1784-1787, a new official and general census took place just over six and a half decades in the mid-XIX century. After the revolution of 1848/1849 in Hungary, and in particular by political and administrative restructuring of the Monarchy, it became inevitable to have a new census organized. Reviewing started in the summer of 1850, but because of preparations for war against Prussia, the actual census was completed in the summer of 1851. It is the only census of Transylvania (until the reunion with Romania) in which nationality was a criterion used to register population. Census instructions did not clarify the meaning of the concept of nationality so that, when entering information various points of view were intertwined.

Later censuses were also organized in the years of 1857, 1869, 1880, 1890, 1900 and 1910⁵². If confession had a clear entering requirement, in terms of nationality things were different than they were in 1850. Only in 1880 a clarification is attempted in this regard. The census organizers were satisfied with recording the *mother tongue*. It is known that not all cases declared the language specific to the ethnic group to which he/she belonged. Then, the children who could not speak were excluded from this category (this is later on fixed in the census in 1890 when children were attributed by default the mother tongue of their birth mother). In 1900, only an alive tongue could be entered as mother tongue, so Latin, Gypsy and Jewish languages could not be highlighted.

Given the lack of the few censuses conducted by the Hungarian state of a variable nationality, we propose an analysis based on the parish registers of civil status. Ecclesiastical information gives us a relatively clear picture of the religious structure, but not of the ethnic structure. This information should be closely analysed, if possible even be compared with information from other sources, because often, this information refers only to followers of that denomination, and not least we can see a certain bias that slipped in when data was recorded. A comparison between information from multiple documentary sources is, we believe, welcome if we want to achieve its purpose, namely to determine the structures of ethnic and confessional structures and the respective links between them.

The available documents do not allow us to accurately determine a person's ethnicity. Even if we wanted to highlight just ethnicity, we cannot do this because at the level of the XIX century even the official

censuses do not use the nationality variable, but only the mother tongue variable. Parish registers and civil status reports allow for establishing a person's ethnic identity in an even lesser extent, the criterion by which the population was recorded was their confession. In the latter case, establishing a relationship between ethnicity and religion has an even greater margin of error.

Based on the information we have in using the census and parish registers, in order to add and verify this information, we propose the following method of determining the ethnic identity: a. a check of the native language; b. establishing the religious identity; c. onomastic study.

The criteria that can determine the ethnicity in this region are, in addition to individual declaration of ethnicity (data is very scarce), language, religion and the name of the person (mainly family name). Obviously, when using these criteria, we must consider all these indicators, not just one. An individual may know or may not know the language of the people to which he/she belongs. He/she loses the religious identity, or simply converts to another denomination or religion. The variable of name is even more relative. A person, often through marriage, changes her/his name. At the beginning of the XX century, the process of linguistic change is increasing under the influence of the Apponyi law⁵³. But, what is ethnic identity? An individual who loses his religion, name and language (especially) and does not lose ethnic identity? Ethnic, national identity is more complex than the religious or linguistic issue. Precisely for that reason, we must consider all factors together with socio-political, economic and cultural conditions that imprint a particular ethnic reality.

It is necessary to use at least two of the mentioned criteria. If we consider religion, we can say that Romanians are Orthodox and Greek Catholics. We do not exclude the fact that some Hungarians might be Greek Catholics or Orthodox⁵⁴. We need to consider all factors, all possible indicators. The fact that we found in documents Hungarians of Greek Catholic or Orthodox religion is explained to a lesser extent by converting Hungarians to these confessions, though we find many such cases, rather by some Romanians' Hungarisation, but who will not give up their religion. After being Hungarised, many Romanians converted to Roman Catholicism or Protestantism.

Another problem that occurs in establishing ethnic identity according to religion is in this area, but not limited to Jews. In 1880, for example, in Beiuș and Vașcău there were 621 Israelis⁵⁵ and in 1900, across the entire Country of Beiuș there were altogether 1,709 Israelis⁵⁶. All these people are in fact Jews. In censuses conducted by the Austri-Hungarian state, the region does not list any Jew (because of census procedures). Most of them declare themselves as Hungarians or Romanians, according to case.

Using both criteria associated with anthroponyms is required, as we have seen. Moreover, it appears that in the process of losing the ethnic identity, language is lost first, then religion and, finally, the anthroponym.

b. Parish registers: sources of reconstruction of family life cycle

In the second half of the XIX century, Transylvania was dominated by a traditional rural society, except for a few urban centres and areas immediately adjacent thereto. The village was a world of constraints and echelons where all individuals must comply with group affiliation. Social diversions of any kind were viewed with scepticism and moral and religious precepts were the defining social and societal norms of those times. Community was strict in control of the family through the various "rituals" of interference in its internal problems. Any disruption of family relationships might mean in terms of coexistence within a community of both small family groups of two partners, a major disruption of community mechanisms. It is these "slippages" that should be avoided. In this respect, an entire suite of collective attitude was triggered, designed to prevent the occurrence of such situations. Community adjusted so by various constraints and determinism, the whole mechanism that enforces order and social norms. Major events of family life, such as baptism, marriage (including pre-marital relations of the two partners) and burial were strictly supervised by the community. Family-community relationship runs deep and it cannot be understood by a fragmented and sequential analysis. From the perspective of the family, the general community is providing the "model". On the other hand, the community lives its emotions and sensitivities in the crucial moments of family life.

The starting point of the family is marriage. It is when the most important social group of a society is created. Community celebrates through marriage the victory over time, and on this occasion the human sensitivity is nearing the "desired perfection"⁵⁷. Through various mechanisms that regulate, the community interferes with the life an individual at its deepest individuals at marriage and at wedding. Starting from this reality, the present our research with marriage as reference point to which we reported the entire initial debate, community-family relationship. Both are taught and prepared to accept the hierarchies that provide community order. At each marriage, not only for the two but for the rest of the community, all defining elements of inter-personal relationships required by the community are repeated out loud. The family was the place where all rules of conduct had to be implemented and to which the entire community group reported.

In the period under our review, the families of two young people getting married were no longer in full control of the marriage act. If marriage was prior decided exclusively by the two families, where the sincere feelings of affection were not important, now young people have a partner of their choice. Despite this radical transformation of mentality, the community still has control over the levers necessary for association for a new family. This control is more visible in the village, which features a traditional existence, by comparison with the city life with more diluted traditions, where relations between the family (usually nuclear) and the community were built on other rules.

Not only social factors acted on the family within this region. The family stayed in the blow of demographic realities, the political-legislative changes occurring during this period. The family was directly affected by various legislative measures that established the framework of its formal existence and indirectly by shaping the whole series of conditions, which have often proved to be very strong. Secular and ecclesiastical legislation on the family – is the subject of a chapter of this work – imposed, while the church was exclusive when it came to the public management of family problems in the second half of the XIX century, a setting where family relationships could develop. The family administration maintained the often tense religious rivalries. Roman Catholic and Greek Catholic, under the influence of the Austrian state bias, often prevailed in competition with other denominations. In developing a family under the major community influence, the constraints and ethno-confessional determinism proved to be strong and decisive. The political reality and all events with political connotations, which occurred during the second half of the XIX century, had a direct influence on the conduct of the processes and phenomena related to ethno-religious evolution of the population of the area in question.

Milestones leading to the formation and shaping of the family are surprised by the entries in parish registers and civil status. Marriage, which is associated with the birth of children, owned the main constructive role in the family. Based on the wealth of information provided by parish registers of civil status, we can reconstruct family lifecycles (birth, marriage, death), and on the other hand, to give life to all experience hidden behind figures. Unveiling of desires, often associated to infirmities recorded in everyday life of families in this area, was not only a wish but also an imperative of this research. Entering the intimacy can only be done through an analysis of several reactions and behavioural capabilities of those involved, and a related analysis on the changes occurring in society (the main trends were of dilution of traditional ethno-religious and community precepts, associated with increasingly visible socio-professional mobility).

Special attention can be paid to elements of erosion, of dissolution of the family. Divorce, cohabitation and illegitimacy of births are closely monitored by the Church; priests had to submit reports to Transylvanian bishoprics on yearly basis, containing the number and evolution of these phenomena. The traditional image of family is changed in this period under the effect of urban culture increasingly present. Modernity takes its toll, not only by imposing the nuclear family, but also by the appearance of a more permissive attitude about slippages. Cohabitation, divorce, legitimacy, by their approach have proven important opportunities to discover the family and everyday realities.

c. Parish registers: sources of reconstruction of mental, socio-economic and professional transformation

Parish registers of civil status are an important source of documentation in terms of socio-professional status of members of religious communities. When children are baptised we learn information about the social status of their parents; in the case of young people getting married or in the case of death, we have the opportunity to reconstruct the socio-professional status of the respective people. A comprehensive analysis over a longer period of time, allowing comparison between different localities (rural, pre-urban or urban) between city of different regions, across the region with different socio-economic profiles, gives the research the possibility of documentation of social, economic and professional changes.

The city is producing significant social and professional changes related to the pre-industrial era and the onset of industrial era that favours not only the human mobility within the city, but also from the rural to urban environments. These mobilities were accompanied by uprooting, of alterities of tradition or conflict with the constraints of the rural patriarchy.

Under the effect of modernity, the society influences the family, not only its form but also the roles and functions that were achieved. Attitudes change with the form and nature of society. There is no longer an extended family and the family no longer accepts the community mix and much less of the village. The changes are most obvious in the city, but in time they became visible in rural areas, too. Nuclear family is the new family where the outside interference is insignificant. With the transition to a modern society, there is a restriction of the social role of the family, role that is passed in time and in various areas to other institutions (market, state, school, etc.). The family no longer dominates social life.

Over time, we identified several significant changes in the collective mentality. The family unit is no longer an economic production: spouses are not performing productive work in the household; the economic link that keeps them together practically no longer exists. There is a reducing in family size by restricting the number of children for a couple and by quasi-generalization of the nuclear family. Smaller families are more suitable for social changes of modernization. Reducing family size caused significant changes in lifestyle, in family behaviors. Another important effect of modernity is linked to matrimonial mobility, the decline of parental authority of the clan in general and increasing the role of individual decision on the timing and choice of marriage partner. Due to the transfer of family functions to other social institutions, economic and political reasons the marriage began to lose importance. Although considerations of wealth plays a less important role, socio-cultural similarity of spouses' statuses prevail in establishing couples.

Compared to the traditional social status of inferiority, the modern woman begins to obtain social and political rights, going all the way to legislating equality with men in all spheres of social life. Work outside the home makes the space provided for communication between spouses, between parents and children, to shrink. Parents try to compensate this by “spoiling” children (gifts, pocket money). Required in traditional society to work at an early age (in workshops or in rural household), children are gradually begun to be perceived not as labour but as a value in itself⁵⁸. We note thus the improvement of the social status of women (economic independence, social and political rights), which is not bound to accept an unsatisfactorily couples life. The effects of such developments are among the most diverse. Moreover, the more the society recognizes rights of women, the more increased is the marital instability.

The phenomenon is visible in the city and towards the beginning of the XX century also in some rural areas where tradition leaves room under the influence of propagation of non-agricultural activities, to a socio-economic modernization process. These changes led, as it easily can be expected, to our mental perceptions, and hence a different reaction of the community. The social norms are changing.

d. Parish registers: sources to identify patterns and demographic trends

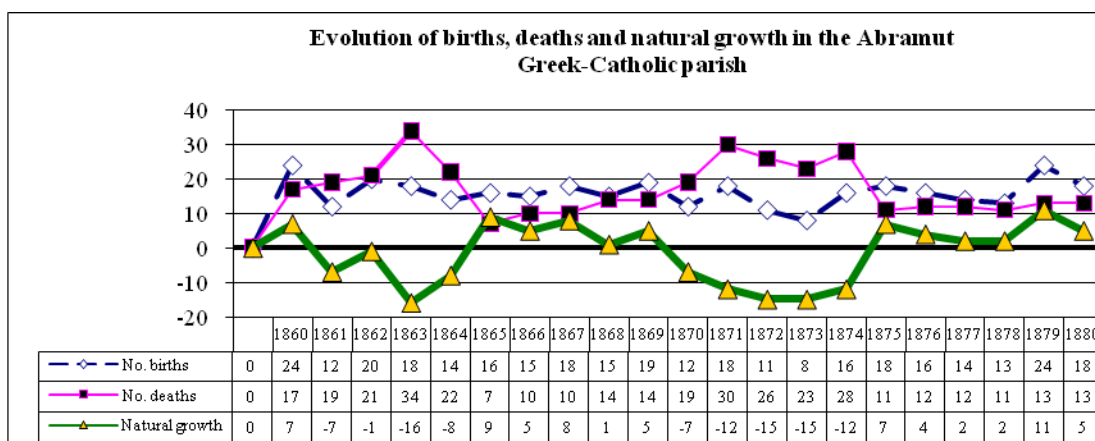
Analysing the natural movement of population during this period, some researchers speak of the demographic revolution that combines old demographic transition model, characterized by high levels of mortality and birth to new model that expresses low levels of mortality and birth. The transition to this model, as we could note from the analysis made on mortality and birth, was started by reducing the mortality rate, followed and a reduction in birth rates. Such a form of expression led to the so-called “transient increase”⁵⁹. With the transformation of socio-economic, cultural and health conditions, a demographic transition model was imposed briefly in the last two decades of the nineteenth century, more and more (first in the city). Characterized by a high birth rate and low mortality, this transition has contributed to a substantial increase in population.

Evolution of birth, death and natural increase in Bihor County⁶⁰

	1866	1868	1870	1877	1879	1881	1885	1887	1889	1901	1905	1910
Birth	18.686	19.011	18.916	17.806	20.546	19.230	22.194	23.285	24.127	16.113	17.158	18.016
Death	13.885	14.941	15.005	16.356	14.783	15.712	17.522	17.191	17.191	11.560	13.045	12.429
Natural increase	4.801	4.070	3.911	1.450	5.763	3.518	4.672	6.094	6.936	4.553	4.113	5.587

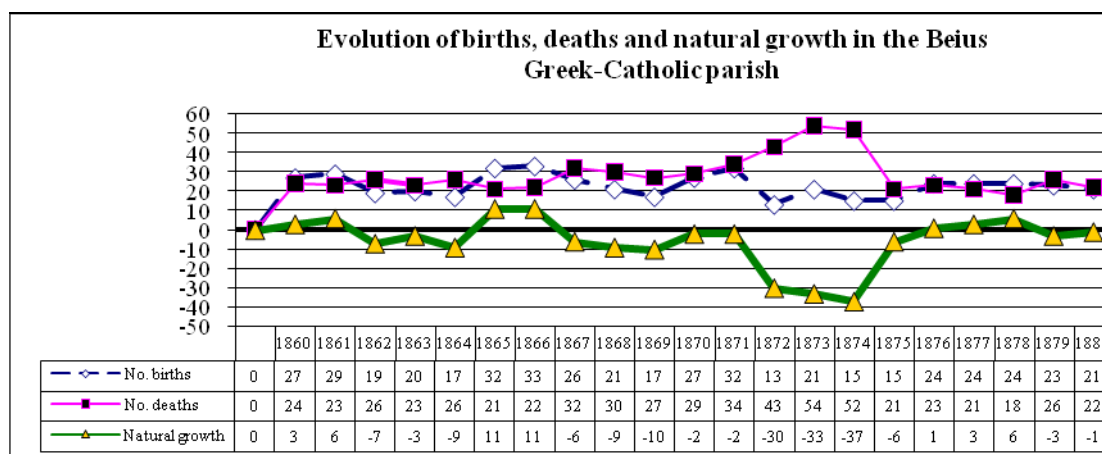
In the Bihor county, reported to the years that our research took as sample landmarks on which correlations were made between births and deaths (thus resulting in the natural surplus), population growth was positive. Despite high mortality, which in some cases shocked by the large scale, the higher level of birth rates led to a natural increase of between 1, 450 people (1877) and 6,094 people, as was the natural increase since 1889.

This positive natural increase did not characterize the entire area of the county. Many localities faced in this period profound and violent expressions of mortality crises that generated a negative natural growth throughout the period we analysed. The major effect of high mortality (less the birth rate, which remains high) the natural increase can be seen in the case of many localities, so much more since the period under review surprised some mortality crises whose effects were downright devastating to the population of these villages. Deep economic crises encountered in those years throughout the Monarchy, in conjunction with outbreaks (keep in mind especially the cholera epidemic of 1872-1873, and its extension) exercise fantastic demographic pressure. The effects of the cholera epidemic in the years 1872-1873 were catastrophic: in Bihor County 30 447 people fell ill, of which 10 980 people died (of which only 1096 people in Oradea), which is 2.28 % of the total county population; in Satmar people fell sick and died: 17 330 5268, representing 2.13% of the total population in this county⁶¹. We offer an example, the case two localities where the effect of regional epidemic was devastating in terms of increased mortality.



Source: Arhivele Naționale, Direcția Județeană Bihor (hereinafter A.N-D.J. BH), *Colecția Registrelor de Stare Civilă*, file, 7, 6-22, 37-55

The Greek Catholic parish of Abrămuț, during 1860-1880, recorded population growth that was negative (the number of people who died by comparison with the number of newborns is greater by 27). Negative growth did not characterize the entire period, but the effect of crisis mortality was captured by us during the death investigation of this parish. Thus we identify two periods with negative levels of natural increase: 1. period 1861-1864, when low natural surplus was due to both lower birth rates, and increased mortality, 2. period 1870-1874, characterized by major crises of mortality caused by numerous epidemics whose effects were heightened during the cholera epidemic of from 1872-1873.



Source: A.N-D.J. BH, *Colecția Registrelor de Stare Civilă*, file, 91, 24-45; file, 94, 25-49

The Greek Catholic community Beius recorded 117 people who died during 1860-1880 over the number of newborn. Despite social and economic progress (to which most often we tend to associate a better existence, which later translate into lower mortality), the Greek Catholic parish of Beius faced this period more death than birth.

Then, the city requires a substantially different demographic model from that recorded in the rural environment: the decrease in births rate is more visible here. Despite tangible progress in terms of decreased mortality, the natural increase is low, even negative.

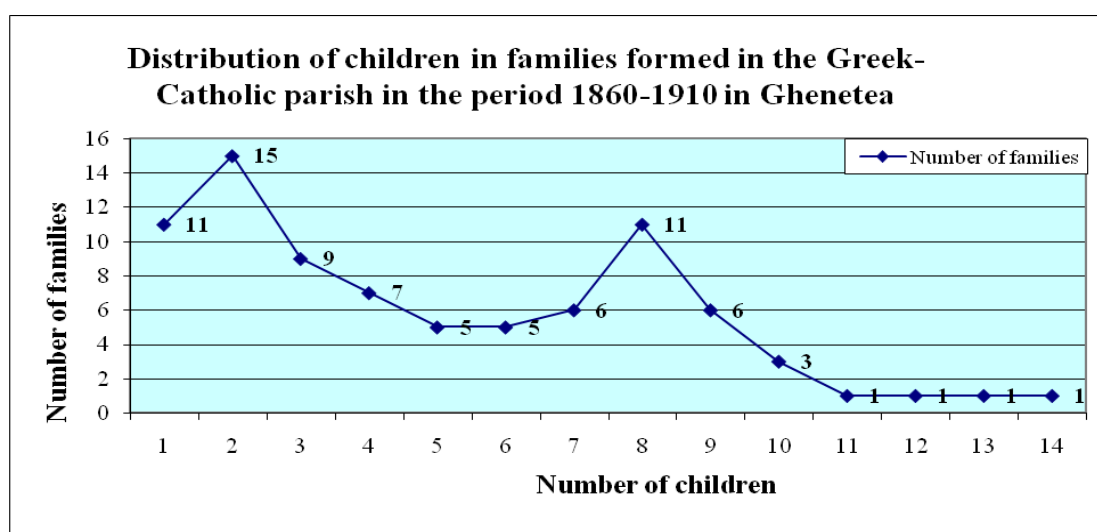
Evolution of the number of births and deaths highlights, in the case of Oradea city, a rather negative natural growth for the period of the second half of the nineteenth century. The negative value of the natural growth in Oradea, somewhat surprisingly, was due to an interesting demographic transformation process.

Evolution of births, deaths and natural growth in Oradea									
	1877	1879	1881	1885	1887	1889	1901	1905	1910
Births	1.172	1.183	1.302	1.326	1.330	1.442	1.540	1.597	1.763
Deaths	1.271	1.363	1.390	1.433	1.362	1.316	1.305	1.644	1.732
Natural growth	-99	-180	-88	-107	-32	126	235	-47	31

Sources: Anuarele "Magyar Statistikai Évkönyv" 1877, 1879, 1881, 1885, 1887, 1889; Iosif I. Adam and I. Pușcaș, "Izvoare de demografie istorică", 236-237, 652-655; Traian Rotariu (coord.), *Recensământul din 1880*, 50-51, 274-275; Idem, *Recensământul din 1900*, 110-113, 474-477.

The city by the cultural, socio-professional and mental environments provided the background that led to the creation of a new family type. The urban family begins to be a modern family. The number of children who are born in the city is decreasing (the proof is the fact that birth rates in Oradea were lower by up to 10 % than the value recorded in the whole county of Bihor). Positive changes that had as effect a decrease in mortality, were not able to keep pace with the reduction of birth: city birth rate drops more visible and earlier than mortality. From this point of view, Oradea family was one in which fewer children were born. The emancipation of the family, arising primarily due to women's empowerment, was not accompanied by a reduction in mortality. The first impression is, in this context, that the family is emancipated earlier than realities of society allowed. Furthermore, the social, economic and medical advances do not measure up to the new challenges leading to "recovery" of society as a whole. Only the late nineteenth century witnessed a phenomenon expected turn. In the years 1901-1910 the natural growth in Oradea was positive throughout the period, registering a natural surplus of 1.405 people⁶². This transformation was possible because of reduction by almost 15 % of the mortality rate in the city, from 1880 to 1910.

This period demographically known as "transitory" records the different behaviors of the population: expressions of traditional coexist with expressions of modernization and empowerment at the same time. We offer an example of a rural subject. We chose the number of children as an indicator for personal and family empowerment.



Source: A.N-D.J. BH, *Colecția Registrelor de Stare Civilă*, file, 461, 32-50, 64-75; file, 462, 4-101; file, 463, 1-21.

As it can be seen, according to the number of children / family, there are numerous categories of families that have: 1-4 children (representing 51.2% of families and 23.07% of all children) and 7-9 children, respectively (constituting 28.05% of families and the number of children no less than 44.23%). Between the two families (like there were different "worlds"!), families with children 4 and 5 children are numerically smaller (by 5 cases each). Despite the two mentioned trends, evident by the large number of families with 1-2 children and those with 7-9 children, most children are born in this parish still in the large families. Although the number of families with 1-2 children is more and more towards the end of the surveyed period, the share of these children remains low, this is because most children remain concentrated in families with several children, although these families are fewer in number.

The fact that many children are born to families in Transylvania does not mean that these families had actually many children. Many of them died at an early age. Children are most at risk when facing social or economic vicissitudes, and the weather. Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century infant mortality rate remained very high. Moreover, as seen in the Old Principality of Transylvania⁶³, in some regions infant mortality rate was even increased during this period. Causes of such high infant mortality were very numerous and complex. They had their origins in the poor living conditions, in the poor nutrition and inadequate, failing hygiene and trained medical staff, and inadequate living conditions in newborns, without the special care needed for children this age, in the attempts to treat diseases of children with "treatments" applied by traditional medicine to adults, etc. Many children, as it can be seen from the analysis of civil status registers, died in childbirth or shortly thereafter. Finally, high infant mortality has its origin in the collective mentality damage and the population attitudes towards medical and health care.

4. Conclusions

Parish registers of civil status have been proving to be important documentary sources for historians as well as for demographers, sociologists, anthropologists, ethnographers, linguists, etc. These Church documents proved to be important, especially where other documentary sources (mainly those in the category of records made by the state) have proved insufficient, incomplete and unclear. The parish registers of civil status in this case are suitable for both a qualitative analysis, and a quantitative one at the level of local communities. Beyond their usefulness and significance of documentary source, these documents should be regarded as being subjective because they were managed by priests (every priest is then an exponent to promote demographic and confessional "realities" and such realities were viewed from the perspective of his own religious convictions). The parish registers, however, prove to be the only documents that allow us to penetrate the privacy of individuals in each community. A documentary is also undeniably a good dowry that researchers should promote and use in their research not only locally but also to verify and demonstrate certain behaviours and overall trends.

¹ Jaques Duparquier, *Introduction à la démographie historique* (Paris – Tournai – Monreal: Gamma, 1974), 9.

² Apud Ștefan Pascu, *Demografia istorică*, in the collective volume *Populație și societate. Izvoare de demografie istorică*, vol. I, published by Ștefan Pascu (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Dacia, 1972), 30.

³ Apud Sorina Paula Bolovan, *Familia în satul românesc din Transilvania. A doua jumătate a secolului al XIX-lea și începutul secolului XX* (Cluj-Napoca: Centrul de Studii Transilvane, Fundația Culturală Română, 1999), 14.

⁴ *Ibid.*; the work of Roger Mols, published in 3 volume, under the title of *Introduction à la démographie historique de villes de l'Europe du XIVe au XVIIe siècle* was published by Recueil de Travaux Printing House, Louvain, 1954-1956.

⁵ André LaRose, "L'enregistrement des événements démographiques par les églises: une question internationale", in the collective *Populație și societate. Izvoare de demografie istorică*, vol. III, published by Ștefan Pascu (Cluj-Napoca, Editura Dacia, 1980), 25.

⁶ Annie Vidal, *Démographie. Eléments d'analyse et évolution du peuplement humain* (Grenoble: Presse Universitaires de Grenoble, 1994), 13.

⁷ Brunnel C., "L'enregistrement des baptêmes, mariages et décès, sous l'ancien régime, en Belgique", in the collective volume *Populație și societate. Izvoare de demografie istorică*, vol. III, published by Ștefan Pascu (Cluj-Napoca, Editura Dacia, 1980), 69.

⁸ Annie Vidal, "Démographie. Eléments d'analyse et evolution", 15.

⁹ Sorina Paula Bolovan, "Istoria familiei și demografia istorică în România la început de mileniu", în *Caiete de antropologie istorică*, anul I, nr. 1 (Cluj-Napoca: 2002), 24.

¹⁰ L. Henry, E. Gautier, *La population de Crulai, paroisse normande: étude historique* (Paris: Institut national d'études démographiques, 1958).

¹¹ Sorina Paula Bolovan, "Familia în satul românesc", 15.

¹² Pierre Goubert, *Beauvais et Beauvaisis de 1600 à 1730. Contribution à l'histoire sociale de la France au XVIIème siècle* (Paris: Service d'Édition et de Vente des Publications de l'Éducation Nationale, 1960).

¹³ Sorina Paula Bolovan, "Familia în satul românesc", 16.

¹⁴ Pierre Chaunu, *Civilizația Europei clasice*, vol. I (București: Editura Meridiane, 1989), 212.

¹⁵ Sorina Paula Bolovan, "Istoria familiei și demografia istorică", 25.

¹⁶ Ioan Horga, "Considerații pe marginea evoluției demografiei istorice: metodă, surse de documentare, modelare proprie", in Corneliu Crăciun, Antonio Faur (coord.), *Istoria - ca experiență intelectuală* (Oradea: Editura Universității din Oradea, 2001), 446; Sorina Paula Bolovan, "Familia în satul românesc", 16; Idem, "Istoria familiei și demografia istorică", 25. In the same year, in Ottawa, the Council decided to establish a committee of historical demography, whose purpose was to promote the new discipline (*Ibid.*).

¹⁷ It is published in 1964, too, but under the nema of "Études et chronique de démographie historique".

¹⁸ Bertrand Grille, *Les sources statistiques de l'histoire de France* (Paris: 1964).

¹⁹ New works get published during these years, bearing an important role in strengthening the historical demographic science, both in terms of methodology, and promoting new research directions: Alain Girard, *Le choix du conjoint. Une enquête psycho-sociologique en France* (Paris: Presse Universitaire de France - Institut national d'études démographiques, 1964); L. Henry, *La fécondité du mariage: Nouvelle méthode de mesure* (Paris: Institut national d'études démographiques, 1965); Idem, *Le manuele de demographie historique* (Geneva-Paris: Librairie Droz, 1967); John T. Noonan, *Contraception et mariage* (Paris: 1969), etc.

²⁰ In 1965, London, D.V. Glass and D.E.C. Eversley edit the collective volume *Population in History. Essays in Demography* that will continue to get published in the years to come.

²¹ E.A. Wrigley (coord.), *An Introduction to English Historical Demography. From the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Century* (Londra, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1966). This work is considered by Pierre Chaunu as a "very successful imitation of French textbooks of historical demography". Pierre Chaunu, *Histoire science sociale. La durée, l'espace et l'homme à l'époque moderne* (Paris: Edition SEDES, 1974), 296.

²² Sorina Paula Bolovan, "Familia în satul românesc", 18.

²³ *Ibid.*, 19.

²⁴ E.A. Wrigley, *Société et Population* (Paris: Hachette, 1969).

²⁵ J. Hajnal, "European marriage pattern in perspective", in *Populations History*, volume edited by D.V. Glass, D.E.C. (Londra: Eversley, 1968), 101-148.

- ²⁶ E. Shorter, *The Making of the Modern Family* (Londra: 1976).
- ²⁷ Pierre Chaunu, "Histoire science sociale", 316; G. Ranki, *The European periphery and industriliazation (1780-1914)* (Budapesta: 1982).
- ²⁸ Pierre Chaunu, "Histoire science sociale". 31.
- ²⁹ Idem, "Civilizația", 222.
- ³⁰ Martine Segalen, *Nuptialité et alliance. Choix du conjoint dans une commune d'Eure* (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 1972).
- ³¹ Also known as the analysis of the moment. By this method, a demographic phenomenon can be analysed during one year, notwithstanding generations. Anie Vidal, "Démographie. Eléments d'analyse et evolution", 36-37.
- ³² Ioan Horga, *Considerații pe marginea evoluției demografiei*, 433.
- ³³ Martine Segalen, *Mari et femme dans la société paysanne* (Paris, Flammarion, 1980), 123-185.
- ³⁴ Idem, *Sociologie de la famille*, ed. IV, (Paris: Armand Colin, 1996), 116-123.
- ³⁵ Ioan Horga, *Considerații pe marginea evoluției demografiei*, 433.
- ³⁶ Yvonne Knibiehler, *Histoire de mère, du Moyen Age à nos jours* (Paris:, Montolba, 1980) (în colaborare cu Chaterine Fouguet); Idem, *La femme au temps des colonies* (Paris: Stock, 1985) (în colaborare cu Régine Goutalier); Idem, *La Femme et les médecins* (Paris: Hachette, 1983) (în colaborare cu Chaterine Fouguet); Idem, *Les pères aussi ont une histoire...* (Paris: Hachette, 1987); etc.
- ³⁷ J.L. Flandrin, *Familles. Parente, maison, sexualité dans l'ancienne société* (Paris: Hachette, 1976).
- ³⁸ Edward Shorter, *Naissance de la famille moderne XVIII^e-XX^e siècle* (Paris: Édition du Seuil, 1977)
- ³⁹ Robert Muchembled, "Famille et l'histoire des mentalités (XVI – XVIIIe siècles). Etat present de la recherché", in *Revue des Etudes Sud-Est Europeenne*, 1974, nr. 3, 349 – 369.
- ⁴⁰ Jack Goody, *La famille en Europe* (French edition translated by Jean-Perre Bardon with a foreword by Jacques Le Goff) (Paris: 2001).
- ⁴¹ M. Mitterauer, R. Sieder, *The European Family. Patriarchy to Partnership from the Midlle Age to the Present* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1982).
- ⁴² André Burguière, Christiane Klapish-Zuber, Martine Segalen, Françoise Zonabend (coord.), *Histoire de la famille* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1986).
- ⁴³ Jaques Duparquier, "Introduction à la démographie historique", 87.
- ⁴⁴ Author of important works of historical demography. In addition to the already cited work (*Introduction à la démographie historique*), we remind of studies such as: "Sur la population française aux XVII-eme et XVIII-eme siècles", in *Revue Historique*, nr. 485, ianuarie-martie 1968, p. 43-79; "La population du Bassin parisien (XVII-XVIII)", in *Hommage a Marcel Reinhard. Sur la population française au XVIIIe et au XIXe siècle*, Paris, 1973; Jacques Dupâquier, *La population rurale du Bassin parisien à l'époque de Louis XIV* (Paris: École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 1979); "Le mouvement saisonnier des mariages en France (1856-1910)", in *Annales de demographie historique* (Paris: Société de Démographie Historique, 1977); *La population française aux XVII-eme et XVIII-eme siècles* (Paris: 1979).
- ⁴⁵ Jaques Duparquier, "Introduction à la démographie historique", 53.
- ⁴⁶ At first the priests recorded were only children who were baptized, and that it was to have a record of parishioners. It followed the recording of weddings, of marriages, and eventually deaths. Information on infant mortality or divorce lacks. Also lacks information about the families who were the protagonists of these demographic events.
- ⁴⁷ Liviu Moldovan, "Înregistrarea de către biserici a botezaților, cununaților și înmormântărilor în Țările Române în secolele XVIII – XIX", in the collective volume *Populație și societate. Izvoare de demografie istorică*, vol. III, published by Ștefan Pascu (Cluj-Napoca, Editura Dacia, 1980), 137.
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁹ An example is the *Gubernia Order* of May 24, 1825 that required the bishops to oversee the preparation of registers of civil status of their dioceses.
- ⁵⁰ Liviu Moldovan, "Înregistrarea de către biserici", 139.
- ⁵¹ Ștefan Pascu, Ștefan Pascu, *L'actualité de la démographie historique*, în volumul colectiv *Populație și societate. Izvoare de demografie istorică*, vol. III, apărut sub redacția lui Ștefan Pascu (Cluj-Napoca, Editura Dacia, 1980), 12-13.
- ⁵² Information related to these censuses was collected from Traian Rotariu (coord.), Maria Semeniuc, Mezei Elemér, *Recensământul din 1910. Transilvania* (Cluj-Napoca: Studia Censualica Transsilvanica, Editura Staff, 1999), 693-712.
- ⁵³ Gheorghe Șișeștean, *Etnie, confesiune și căsătorie în nord-vestul Transilvaniei* (Zalău: Editura Caiete Silvane, 2002), 15.
- ⁵⁴ A good example is the village of Beius Șuncuiș (Bihar county), where in 1900 there were, according to census 370 Romanian Hungarian, 388 Greek Catholics, plus the 19 Orthodox. From here we can easily conclude that some of the declared Hungarian majority population in the village were Greek Catholic or Orthodox.
- ⁵⁵ Traian Rotariu (coord.), *Recensământul din 1880. Transilvania* (Cluj-Napoca: Studia Censualica Transsilvanica, Editura Staff, 1997), 50-82.
- ⁵⁶ Alexandru Ilieș, *Etnie, confesiune și comportament electoral în Crișana și Maramureș* (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Dacia, 1998), 327.
- ⁵⁷ Pierre Chaunu, "Civilizația", 222.
- ⁵⁸ J.C. Chesnais, *La transition démographique* (Paris: Presse Universitaire de France, 1986), 93-141.
- ⁵⁹ Apud Ioan Bolovan, *Transilvania între Revoluția de la 1848 și Unirea din 1918. Contribuții demografice* (Cluj-Napoca: Centrul de Studii Transilvane, Fundația Culturală Română, 2000), 158.

⁶⁰ *Annals Magyar Statistikai Évkönyv. Szerkeszti és kiadja. Az országos Magyar Kir. Statistikai. Hivatal I Füzet (1877 – Budapest, 1878; 1879 – Budapest, 1881; 1881 – Budapest, 1883; 1885 – Budapest, 1887; 1887 – Budapest, 1889; 1889 – Budapest, 1891; Iosif I. Adam, I. Pușcaș, Izvoare de demografie istorică, vol. II, Secolul al XIX-lea – 1914. Transilvania, (București: Direcția Generală a Arhivelor Statului, 1987), 236-237, 652-655; Traian Rotariu (coord.), “Recensământul din 1880”, 50-51, 274-275; Traian Rotariu (coord.), Recensământul din 1900. Transilvania (Cluj-Napoca: Studia Censuaria Transsilvanica, Editura Staff, 1999), 110-113, 474-477.*

⁶¹ Iosif I. Adam, I. Pușcaș, “*Izvoare de demografie istorică*”, 243-244.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 656.

⁶³ Value of the infant mortality rate in Transylvanian space (not included here the regions of Banat, Crisana and Maramures) was in 1865 to 178.3 ‰, while in the first decade of the twentieth century to reach 193 ‰. Ioan Bolovan, “*Transilvania între Revoluția*”, 156.